



# Department of Justice

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## **FEDERAL JURY CONVICTS INMATE WHO ESCAPED FROM HOOD COUNTY JAIL ON ATTEMPTED MURDER OF A FEDERAL OFFICER**

### **Defendant Faces Life in Prison, Without Parole**

**FORT WORTH, Texas** — Jason Lee Johnston, who escaped from the Hood County Sheriff's Office Detention Center in late July, was convicted yesterday afternoon, following a one-day jury trial before U.S. District Judge John McBryde, of attempted murder of a federal officer, assault of a federal officer using a deadly weapon and use of a firearm to commit crimes of violence. Johnston faces a maximum statutory sentence of life in prison; Judge McBryde set a February 8, 2008 sentencing date.

The government presented evidence at trial that Johnston, 24, and Cleties Matthew Conley, escaped from the Hood County Jail on July 28, 2007. At the time, Johnston was waiting to be transferred to a Texas Department of Corrections Detention facility where he was to serve a 30-year sentence for aggravated assault with a deadly weapon. That same day, Fort Worth Police Department (FWPD) officers saw Johnston, his wife and co-defendant Tiffany Michelle Johnston, their 18-month-old child, and Conley enter a blue 4-door vehicle. Law enforcement officers from the FWPD and the U.S. Marshals stopped the vehicle on Las Vegas Trail in Fort Worth. During the stop, Jason Lee Johnston, who was seated in the front passenger seat, refused to exit the vehicle and fired a handgun at an FWPD officer. Johnston and the others then drove away, but stopped shortly thereafter, where Tiffany Johnston, the child, and Conley got out of the vehicle and were taken into custody.

A Special Agent with the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) pursued Johnston. After a fast and dangerous vehicle chase, Johnston stopped his vehicle, aimed his handgun at the agent, and fired, striking his vehicle. The ATF agent fired back, but did not strike Johnston before he sped away and again eluded officers.

After she was arrested, Tiffany Johnston told officers that she had provided the handgun to Jason Lee Johnston and that he told her that he needed the firearm "for protection." He also

repeatedly told her that he was not going back to jail and would not be taken alive. Tiffany Michelle Johnston, who testified at yesterday's trial, pled guilty earlier this month to one count of possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. She faces a statutory maximum sentence of 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine; she is scheduled to be sentenced by Judge McBryde in February 2008.

Three days later, the U.S. Marshals Service Fugitive Apprehension Strike Team (USMS FAST) found and arrested Jason Lee Johnston at a residence in Granbury, Texas and seized the handgun, which was loaded.

U.S. Attorney Roper praised the investigative efforts of the Fort Worth Police Department, ATF and the U.S. Marshals Service. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jay DeWald and Fred Schattman.

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